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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASUNCION 001119

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA A/S NORIEGA AND PDAS DERHAM
STATE ALSO FOR DS/T/ATA
STATE PASS TO USAID LAC/AA
BUENOS AIRES FOR LEGATT WILLIAM GODOY
NSC FOR SUE CRONIN
SOUTHCOM FOR POLAD DAN JOHNSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/02/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [SNAR](#) [KCRM](#) [PA](#) [CO](#) [BR](#)

SUBJECT: PARAGUAY: UPDATE ON CUBAS AND DEBERNARDI
KIDNAPPING INVESTIGATIONS

REF: A. ASUNCION 1012

[1](#)B. ASUNCION 668 AND PRECEDING

[1](#)C. 04 ASUNCION 1449 AND PRECEDING

Classified By: PolOff Mark A. Stamilio, reason 1.4(d).

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: In recent months, Paraguayan authorities filed formal charges against 14 of 28 suspects in the kidnapping and murder of Cecilia Cubas and located the house where kidnappers held Maria Edith Bordon de Debernardi for 64 days in 2001. Members of the left-wing Patria Libre Party (PPL) are implicated in both kidnappings. Prosecutors intend to present evidence that the PPL sought advice from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). They believe that recent stirrings in San Pedro Department suggest that radical groups are actively planning additional kidnappings. They stressed Paraguayan authorities' need for hostage negotiation training, and requested that the FBI assist in identifying the voices of several suspects on a PPL video tape seized in 2003. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) In late July, the Attorney General's office filed formal charges against 14 of 28 suspects in the kidnapping and murder of Cecilia Cubas, daughter of former President Raul Cubas (ref B). Although all 14 of the defendants are Paraguayan nationals, the charges also implicate the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in the crime. The lead prosecutor in the Cubas case, Arnaldo Giuzzio, announced that he intended to present evidence at trial that the kidnappers sought the FARC's advice in planning and executing the crime.

[1](#)3. (U) In June, authorities located the house where kidnappers held Maria Edith Bordon de Debernardi for 64 days in 2001 (ref B). A confessed accessory to the crime led prosecutors to the house, which is located in a middle-class Asuncion neighborhood. The search of the house revealed an underground chamber similar to the one where Ms. Cubas' body was discovered in February. Following the search, the lead prosecutor in the Debernardi case, Nestor Suarez, opined that the same gang was responsible for both kidnappings.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Comment: Members of the left-wing Patria Libre Party (PPL) are implicated in both kidnappings. PPL leaders Juan Arrom and Anuncio Marti were accused of orchestrating the Debernardi kidnapping. They were later granted refugee status in Brazil after they allegedly were tortured by authorities in Paraguay. A militant PPL faction led by Osmar Martinez is charged with responsibility for the Cubas kidnapping and murder. Paraguayan authorities believe that at least three of the suspects in the Cubas kidnapping also were involved in the Debernardi kidnapping. Lawyers representing the Cubas family are pressing the Attorney General's office to look more closely at links between the two cases. If prosecutors were to connect Arrom and/or Marti to the Cubas case, it could lead the GOP to increase pressure on Brazil to extradite them to Paraguay.

[1](#)5. (SBU) Comment continued: Giuzzio told PolOff on August 16 that Paraguayan authorities had arrested an individual who was attempting to buy a house in San Pedro Department using a false identity. San Pedro is a center of radical PPL activity. While the individual arrested was not a PPL member, Giuzzio fears that he was seeking to purchase the house on behalf of the PPL in preparation for another PPL kidnapping. Giuzzio's fears may be justified since, in similar fashion, the PPL employed a third party to purchase the house where Ms. Cubas was held.

[1](#)6. (C) Comment continued: Giuzzio also told PolOff that, within the week, the Attorney General's office expected to receive from a journalist in San Pedro Department a copy of a video tape showing another criminal gang rehearsing to execute a kidnapping. In 2003, authorities seized a similar tape during the search of a house that belonged to one of the

suspects in the Debernardi case. The gang on the new tape is reportedly associated with Elvio Benitez, the purported leader of a campesino organization responsible for protests and land invasion in San Pedro (ref C). Police and military officials suspect that Benitez is involved in marijuana trafficking. During the Ambassador's recent trip to San Pedro (ref A), a school teacher in the municipality of Santa Rosa told an Embassy driver that Benitez controls activity in the area like an organized crime boss. Considering the estimated USD 1.3 million that the PPL extorted in the Cubas and Debernardi kidnappings, it is conceivable that Benitez would turn next to kidnapping as a means to increase his organization's revenue.

17. (SBU) Comment continued: Giuzzio inquired about possible USG assistance in two areas. First, Giuzzio stressed Paraguayan authorities' need for hostage negotiation training, particularly in light of what he perceives to be preparations for additional kidnappings. Giuzzio was a member of the Paraguayan delegation that attended the FBI's kidnapping crime scene management training in Bogota in April. He feels that hostage negotiation training would be an essential complement to the Bogota training. PolOff advised Giuzzio that a Diplomatic Security Anti-Terrorism Assistance (DS/ATA) assessment conducted in June would serve as the basis for determining what GOP training needs the U.S. could look to meet.

18. (SBU) Comment continued: Second, Giuzzio requested technical assistance in identifying the voices of several suspects on the PPL video tape seized in 2003. He told PolOff that voices in the background sounded like Brazilian-accented Portuguese and Colombian-accented Spanish. With technical assistance from the FBI, he opined, the Attorney General's office could positively identify one of the Portuguese speakers as a Brazilian suspect in the case. He also felt it would be useful to confirm whether Colombian nationals advised the kidnappers in the Debernardi case, as they are believed to have done in the Cubas case. Giuzzio indicated that he would submit a written request for assistance, along with a copy of the video tape.

19. (SBU) Comment continued: On August 30, in one of his final acts as Attorney General, Oscar Latorre removed Giuzzio and Suarez from the Cubas case. Although Latorre characterized the move as a routine realignment of personnel, the timing of the decision -- on the last day he was empowered to do so and just days before an October 6 preliminary hearing in the Cubas case -- led to intense speculation about more sinister motives. Giuzzio and Suarez reportedly do not get along with Javier Casal, the head of the Judicial Investigations Unit and a personal friend of Latorre. Giuzzio and Suarez reportedly kept Casal on the sidelines during the Cubas investigation, perhaps because he had been a subject in the investigation of the alleged torture of Arrom and Marti. Latorre's successor, Ruben Candia Amarilla, told the press on August 31 that he would review Latorre's decision and reinstate Giuzzio and Suarez if it appeared that their removal was the product of a personal or political grudge.

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